DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 272 877 CS 209 934

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TITLE Recruiting Blacks into Journalism.
PUB DATE Aug 86
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (69th, Norman, OK, August 3-6, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Attitudes; Black Education; *Black Employment; *Black Students; Higher Education; High Schools; *Journalism Education; Mass Media; *News Media; *Newspapers; Recruitment; *Student Recruitment

ABSTRACT

Despite significant progress in the recruitment of black journalists, adequate representation of blacks in newsrooms remains an acute concern. The results of (1) statistical monitoring by organizations such as the Newspaper Fund, (2) searching of trade press and academic journal articles for insights into the problem, (3) an open-ended questionnaire mailed to administrators of 22 journalism programs with a substantial percentage of black students, and (4) focus group interviews with black undergraduate mass communication majors at the University of Florida revealed that while the journalism profession can be justifiably proud of its commitment to black parity in hiring, progress toward that goal will not be easy. Low interest by blacks is often attributed to beliefs that newspaper work has little credibility or trust among blacks, that low pay is a deterrent, and that writing difficulties keep young blacks from considering careers in journalism. But the importance of these reasons seems to be overestimated. While the prestige and reputation of the journalism school are important in fostering an interest in a newspaper career, newspapers and journalism schools must also make better use of black journalists as role models for students deciding upon a career and begin their recruitment at the high school level. Since leadership in the area of minority recruitment is coming primarily from the industry, rather than from journalism education, educators must become more aggressive and committed to goals of black parity. A seven-page reference list is appended. (SRT)

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RECRUITING BLACKS INTO JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT: Despite significant progress in the recruitment of black journalists, adequate representation of blacks in newsrooms remains an acute concern. This project specifically addresses the question of why young blacks are choosing not to enter journalism. It reviews academic and trade press literature on the topic, and reports on both an open-ended survey of a small number of journalism administrators and focus groups with male and female black undergraduates at the University of Florida.

Presented to the Minorities and Communication Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Norman, Okla. August, 1986.

Funding for this project was provided through a grant from the Palm Beach Newspapers.

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RECRUITING BLACKS INTO JOURNALISM

INTRODUCTION

Despite significant progress in the recruitment of black journalists during the past 15 years, adequate representation of blacks in U.S. newsrooms remains an acute concern for the journalism profession. A recruitment goal adopted by several professional and academic journalism organizations offers "parity" as the definition of adequate representation: a percentage of blacks in newsrooms equal to the percentage of blacks in the U.S. population overall.

As a statistical research problem, measuring progress toward that goal involves trying to hit a moving target. For one thing, the percent of the total U.S. population that is black is steadily increasing. For another, the age distribution among the black population differs markedly from the Anglo population; the former shows a greater proportion of young people. That means parity goals will differ, depending on whether the criterion is based on the total population or the adult working population.

Perhaps the greatest problem with statistical approaches is unreliable numbers, especially for identifying trends. Problems encountered by the U.S. Census in counting minorities are well-documented. Surveys, even with larger than traditional sample sizes, will generally have sampling errors of 3 to 5 percentage points. Yet we are working in an area in which even such a significant gain as doubling the number of black journalists in one decade meant moving only from about 2 percent to about 4 percent.

The initial progress in black recruitment of the1970s has slowed considerably in the 1980s. Current statistics show the percentage of blacks attending college now declining, despite substantial increases in the percentage of blacks gaining high school degrees. At the same time, there

are indications that fewer and fewer blacks choosing communications careers have an interest in newspaper reporting. Articles in the trade press reflect the difficulties and frustrations newspaper editors experience in attempting to recruit minorities. An informal poll of journalists and educators (Burgoon and Burgoon, 1985) indicated that almost all of the people contacted believed that minority recruitment is a major problem facing the industry. "and many are pessimistic about how well print journalism will fare in the future as other professions compete more aggressively for minority students."

The impetus for this project came from a newspaper editor experiencing those frustrations. In its original form, the research question was phrased negatively: Why are young blacks choosing NOT to enter journalism?

The project recognizes the importance of statistical evidence, but draws initially upon qualitative approaches. This paper is based on three components:

1) Compiling available information. That includes the statistical monitoring being done by organizations such as the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Newspaper Fund and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. It also includes searching trade press and academic journal articles for insights into the problem.

2) An open-ended questionnaire mailed to administrators of 22 journalism programs identified as having a substantial percentage of black students. The questions attempted to assess what recruitment and retention programs those schools were using and how successful they were.

3) Focus group interviews with black undergraduate mass communication majors at the University of Florida. Separate groups of male

and female students were recruited, following a short phone interview with a majority of the 83 black students (graduate and undergraduate) enrolled in the fall of 1985.

TRENDS IN MINORITY RECRUITMENT

Until recent decades, black representation in newsrooms was trivial. Surveys by Edward Trayes (1969, 1970a, 1970b, 1979) found that the proportion of black journalists more than doubled in the decade following the ghetto riots and publication of the Kerner Commission report. The first of that survey series found blacks holding about 2 percent of newsroom jobs in big city dailies. Most were in reporting and photo positions. Other surveys (ASNE 1974; Kotz, 1979) reported that overall industry norms in minority hiring overestimated black participation: only about a third of all blacks in newspapers held editorial staff positions and blacks were markedly absent from smaller papers.

Throughout this period, broadcasting did a better job of integrating its professional staffs. Blacks represented about 10 percent of the total adult population and less than 3 percent of newspaper staff positions. By contrast, blacks represented about 8 percent of professional broadcast positions (Bogart, 1981).

There is evidence that minority hiring has slowed considerably since the early gains of the 1970s in both broadcasting and newspapers (Johnson, 1976; Perry, 1980; ASNE, 1982, 1984; Gannett, 1980, 1982, 1984; Harris, 1981).

In many respects, minority hiring patterns over the past two decades have paralleled trends in journalism school enrollments generally. Interest in journalism as a major mushroomed in the 1970s, grew more modestly in

the early 1980s, and now appears to be leveling off. Interest in traditional news-editorial print journalism has declined as more communication students elect to major in advertising and public relations (Becker et al, forthcoming).

Black college enrollment also experienced its greatest growth during the 1970s. While overall black enrollment is declining in the 80s, interest in communication majors remains high. Statistics gathered by the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund annual surveys of journalism graduates indicate that about 10 percent of the 1983 and 1984 graduates were minorities, the heaviest proportion since those surveys began asking race in 1978 (Haklik, 1985). According to the Newspaper Fund surveys, editorial and broadcasting majors account for about a third each of black seniors. Newspapers hire 20 to 25 percent of black journalism graduates; broadcasting hires 10 to 15 percent. In enrollment, public relations accounts for perhaps 15 to 20 percent and advertising 5 to 10 percent. In placement, perhaps 5 to 10 percent of black graduates went into public relations and less than 2 percent into advertising. Those percentages are "smoothed," because of differences in the way the surveys reported either sequence or placement.

BLACK CAREER CHOICES

An important point to make is that comparison of black/white career choice differences reflect socio-economic status as much as race. The same factors apply here as in evidence that SES factors are more important than race in explaining minority newspaper readership (Browne, 1985).

A review of research on black/white career choice highlighted these trends: "Blacks tend to be lower in their aspirations, feel that the choice is largely beyond their control, and more often aspire to helping kinds of jobs

(for example, social work, teaching, personnel) while also revealing the effects of sexual background (females tend to have higher aspirations than males) and high school type (blacks in segregated high schools tend to choose service trades, while desegregated students tend to select professional occupations.)" (Dawkins and Kinloch, 1981).

A large-scale survey of black career choices done by Michael and Judee Burgoon (1985) provided this summary:

"The single most important influence is the personal enjoyment derived from activities surrounding the job. Related to this is one's proficiency in writing, speaking and language, work experience related to the major field and extracurricular activities.

"The second most important influence is the perceived prestige, job availability and salary potential of a career.

"The third factor is a student's educational preparation and aptitude for a job. (Black) students place much less stock in aptitude tests than actual experience in their classes and extracurricular activities.

"Fourth on the list is the reputation of the program in the college or university the student expects to attend.

"Least in importance are the recommendations and occupations of others, including family and friends. This runs counter to previous research on the majority culture, which suggested a more influential role for parents, teachers and friends."

JOURNALISM AS A CAREER CHOICE

Relatively few published studies track student decision-making in choosing journalism as a career. Bowers (1974) reviewed some of the earlier work for his survey of journalism majors at the University of North Carolina. A somewhat more extensive review may be found in a book by Becker et al (forthcoming) on the training and hiring of journalists based on surveys of journalism students and industry managers in Ohio and Kentucky. Published work on black students specifically tends to be anecdotal (Mencher, 1969;

Gilliam, 1972; Skinner, 1979). although there is some statistical evidence from surveys of black journalists (Hawpe, 1982; Considine, 1984).

The factors identified in these studies related to an interest in journalism include writing ability, an interest in public affairs, prestige of the profession, early experience and salary and job opportunities.

Writing Ability: This has been identified as a primary factor in almost all of the studies of journalism career choices. What seems to be going on is that students who enjoy writing (or more likely, who have been praised for their writing ability) are tracked toward journalism. Writing is also a frequently mentioned reason in the trade press articles that blacks may be counseled away from journalism, although there is not much hard evidence on that point. Becker et al found blacks more likely than whites to say writing was important in the career choice, although those students had already selected journalism when they were interviewed. In the broader-based Burgoon and Burgoon study, few high school blacks said they were considering a communication career, but even among those, over a quarter said they needed help in writing. Writing skills have been identified as one reason more blacks go into broadcasting than print. That may be a perceptual gap; the part of the Becker work that surveyed employers found broadcasters placing as much importance as editors on writing skills.

Public Affairs Interest: In the published studies, this factor has two somewhat distinct components. At one level, an early interest in current events and keeping up with the news leads to an interest in a journalism career. At another level, that interest is related to a perception of journalism as an agent for social change. For blacks, these two components may be less connected than for whites. The argument here hinges around media coverage of blacks. If blacks do not see themselves and their concerns

reflected in white media, then the connection is not made between an interest in current events and an interest in a journalism career. And a lack of coverage leads to a perception of white media as a barrier rather than agent for social change (Mencher, 1969).

That argument is speculative and may be outdated. Newspaper coverage of blacks has improved substantially in the past few decades (Martindale, 1985). And there is little evidence of a generalized black distrust of newspapers as a white institution, despite frequent claims of that nature (Bogart, 1981).

Prestige of the Profession: The Burgoons noted a common assumption among journalists and educators that journalism has little credibility as a profession, especially among blacks. Fielder and Tipton (1986) cite evidence that runs counter to that. Surveys do show that television has higher credibility than newspapers for blacks; but that may be related to SES, or it could be related to greater black visibility in television. An indication of that lack of visibility in newspapers can be seen in black respondents who underestimate the numbers of black newspaper editors and reporters (Clark, 1984).

Another assumption noted by the Burgoons is that journalism is perceived as an easy major. Students in the Becker et al study rejected "easy major" as a reason for entering journalism. There was also evidence of a marked racial difference here. The sole item in a battery of reasons for majoring in journalism that showed statistically significant differences by race was one tapping the prestige of the journalism school. Blacks were more likely than whites to cite that as a reason for their choice of major. The Bowers study of North Carolina students and another of black students at the

University of Florida (Terhune, 1984) found the reputation of the school an important factor in choice of major.

Early Experience: The published studies make it clear that for many students, especially Anglos, interest in journalism is stimulated by working on school publications. Implicit in discussion about the importance of early experience is a presumption that it be a positive one. Considine, (1984) indicates that work on high school publications is not typical of black journalists, and in any case may not be a positive experience. In addition to racism, there is also the isolation that comes from being a token black, a problem that extends to college (Kern, 1982) and the newsroom (Williams, 1985).

Salary and Job Opportunities: According to Grey (1976), low pay does pose recruiting problems in journalism; it is a factual problem and not just a perceptual one. Nevertheless, that perception may be exaggerated. In comparisons with salaries of "helping" professions that have traditionally attracted blacks, journalism does not fare that badly. The Dow-Jones Newspaper Fund annual surveys show that print entry level jobs are lower than public relations or advertising, but they are higher than broadcasting. Here, as in other factors effecting black recruitment, the problem may be one of limited or erroneous knowledge about journalism work.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As noted earlier, the broad question guiding this project was phrased negatively: why blacks are NOT entering journalism. Stated somewhat more positively, an early question was whether or not evidence exists of a trend showing blacks less likely to enter journalism than previously.

Much of the discussion in the trade press and journal literature centers around factors that appear to be keeping young blacks away from newsrooms. The survey of journalism educators and the focus groups attempted to address some of the possible reasons: journalism is not a trustworthy or prestigious occupation, pay is not attractive, and young blacks are more interested in television jobs, partially because of writing problems. The more important concern was to identify factors that would serve as a draw rather than a deterrent.

Specific hypotheses were not formulated and tested. Rather, the approach was to "listen" to answers to less obtrusive questions for evidence to either confirm or disconfirm expectations. In the sections that follow, an attempt was made to let the journalism administrators and black students speak for themselves as much as possible.

SURVEY OF JOURNALISM EDUCATORS

One part of this project involved a mail questionnaire to 22 colleges and universities whose enrollment was primarily white, but who had either a substantial number or percentage of black journalism students. As a check, the questionnaire asked for the approximate number of total and black communications majors, as well as the percentage of minority students by sequence. Nine open-ended questions attempted to assess what recruitment and retention programs these schools were using and how successful they were. Twelve of the 22 questionnaires were returned.

What follows is a summary of responses to the nine open-ended questions.

1. Do you maintain any sort of regular contact with high schools or community colleges for the purpose of recruiting minority students? If so, please explain briefly.

Six of the 12 respondents either said "no" or did not respond to this question.

The six who did respond each gave a different method of contact. These included summer workshops, subscribing to the Newspaper Fund minority list, contact through Affirmative Action offices, and on-campus journalism days. One mentioned corresponding with high schools and one specified contact with high school counselors, English department chairs and publications advisors.

2. Do you have a part-time or full-time person on your staff assigned to minority recruitment? If so, please describe job briefly.

Nine of the administrators said they did not have such a staff person. The other three schools delegated minority recruitment to an admissions

officer, to a staff member in charge of high school relations, or to a staff member working with the high school press association.

In general, schools that seemed to be doing the best job with minorities had in some way institutionalized the process, either through a staff person, a minority affairs committee, or a student chapter of the Association for Minority Journalists.

3. Do you work with professional media to attract and retain minority students in your program? If so, please explain briefly.

Only three schools answered no to this question. It is possible that the consistency in responses here may be reflecting industry commitment as much as programs by journalism educators.

The answers mentioned a variety of activities, including The Newspaper Fund Urban Journalism workshops, ASNE minority job fairs and informal discussions at meetings. Two respondents mentioned that metropolitan dailies recruited blacks heavily and one singled out a specific paper as "very active and interested," especially with scholarships and internship opportunities. One school mailed letters and minority brochures to papers, tv and radio stations in major cities with large minority populations to encourage editors to identify talented minorities on their staffs for a year of graduate study. One respondent noted that "minority placement was a greater problem than minority recruitment."

4. Do you have any special programs for minority students once they are enrolled? If so, please explain briefly.

Five of the schools had no such programs; two others mentioned university-wide programs.

Again, the schools that had in some sense institutionalized minority affairs indicated the widest range of activities, either by a minority affairs committee or a minority journalists association. One school with a designated director of a minorities program mentioned a special minority section of an introductory mass media course and the formation of a Student Minorities in Mass Communication Club.

5. Do you have any tutorial programs specifically aimed at minority students? If so, please explain, and also tell how you encourage students to participate in such a program.

Five schools mentioned none; four mentioned university- wide remedial programs.

One school mentioned that the Association of Minority Journalists sometimes conducts tutorials and another indicated a departmental proposal in the works for graduate students to serve as special tutors.

6. Do you offer special scholarships and financial aid to minority students? If yes, please explain briefly.

Five schools said no; two said they had one scholarship designated for a minority student. Two schools said minorities receive more scholarship support in aid packages than do other students or that scholarship/work study was weighted in favor of minorities. Others mentioned university-wide minority scholarships open to journalism students.

7. Recent articles have noted a significant lack of interest in newspaper editorial work on the part of black students. Have you noted such a trend? If so, what would you say are the main reasons?

One person did not respond to this question and two answered no ("No more than in the past." and "I sure haven't.")

Among the others, six mentioned the appeal of broadcasting as one of the primary reasons for the decline in interest in newspapers. Most of those tied that trend to low newspaper pay. "I don't believe there is much mystery to this," one wrote. "Opportunities for blacks are better in broadcasting (more jobs) and PR (better pay)." Another noted that "The electronic media are more glamorous and seem to offer more job opportunities (a superficial impression, but one they have nevertheless.)"

Problems with writing, a lack of career information and a lack of role models among blacks were mentioned three times each.

8. Can you tell me anything else about your efforts at recruiting and retaining minority students that will be of help to other journalism programs?

Three respondents said no; others gave a variety of suggestions, including these:

"The success of our minority students has been advertised and is our chief recruiting device."

"Very frustrating. Best minority students picked off by major universities long before we even have a chance to talk with them."

"We attend the Howard University media conference every year to recruit minority grad students."

"One successful activity would be names of counselors of high schools who know of potential students with good writing skills. Such students must

be sought through personal contact rather than through secondary sources. Knowledge of publications advisers of high schools is also beneficial."

"I would just suggest that it cannot be a one-time effort, no matter how splashy that effort is. Results come only after year-after-year contacts. I believe sincerity must be demonstrated."

"Make minorities welcome, but don't patronize them. Recognize their special needs, which includes consideration of various feelings of intimidation they may feel in an alien environment. ... Retention depends upon feelings of belonging and success. Special student organizations (Black Journalists, etc.) may help, but I think they should be weaned away eventually into SPJ/SDX student chapters and other integrated groups. ... And most important, have faculty who are interested in minority students as people rather than as quotas. ... Programs should be promoted through a mediator who will identify students and assist with application process. Promotion should take advantage of the attraction of competition. ... Follow-up is required."

9. Finally, what do you think journalism schools and the industry should be doing to attract more minorities?

Higher pay was the most common answer here, along with promoting the success story and making sure successful role models get to the campuses and high schools.

A sense of frustration also seemed to mark the responses of the journalism educators to this question. "Nothing seems to work," wrote one. Another noted: "I don't know. I believe market realities are clearly understood by young blacks and have significant influence on career decisions."

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups for this project were based on procedures defined by Mertin, et. al.:

> Persons interviewed are known to have been involved in a particular situation. ... The hypothetically significant elements, patterns, processes, and total structure of the situation have been provisionally analyzed by the social scientist. ... On the basis of this analysis he takes the third step of developing an interview guide, setting forth the major areas of inquiry and the hypotheses which provide criteria of relevance for the data to be obtained in the interview. Fourth and finally, the interview is focused on the subjective experiences of persons exposed to the pre-analyzed situation in an effort to ascertain their definitions of the situation.

The nature of this project reinforced the homogeneity traditionally associated with focus groups. All participants were black and all were undergraduate communication majors. The latter criterion limited the age range of participants. Because of research on the tendencies of males to dominate mixed sex groups, separate male and female groups were formed. Moderators were also black and of the same sex as the group participants.

Because the original research question had been formulated as why black students are not choosing to enter print journalism, news-editorial majors were intentionally not recruited. Otherwise, recruitment attempted to reflect the proportion of black communication students in specific majors in the mass communication college. College records showed a total of 73 black undergraduates, most of them in broadcasting and public relations. Ten students were originally recruited in each of the male and female groups. One person failed to show for the female group, four for the male group. (One male pre-medical student accompanied a friend to the male

group and was invited to participate.) All group members were paid $10 for their participation. The following table shows the numbers of black students by sex and major in the college and in the focus groups as finally constituted.

	R/TV	ADV	PR	JOU	TOTAL
Females	20/4	7/2	20/3	2/0	49/9
Males	12/4	6/1	3/1	3/0	24/7

The interview guide began with a brief description of focus group methodology. It stressed that we were not interested in routine biographical information, although we were interested in their personal experiences. The interview guide covered the following topics: early interest in careers in general, influences in decisions about a particular major, awareness of careers in newspapers, and a series of general questions about ways to interest blacks in newspaper careers.

SUMMARIES AND SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

1. Childhood career choices tended to be fairly traditional, especially for the females. Some participants singled out childhood media exposures as being influential in leading them to communication career choices. These were typical comments:

F: Well, I recall wanting to be a nurse when I was growing up.

F: I can remember as a small girl I always wanted to be a teacher. I think that was because my mother was a teacher.

M (advertising major): I can remember when I was small always singing the little jingles. I'll associate that with when my mom takes me to the store and I would always want a certain brand just because I remember the jingle.

F: Well, I just remember growing up I've always had an interest in news and sports and my brothers used to call me Walter Cronkite, that type thing. And from that point on I just kind of figured that's what I wanted to do.

2. Participants generally indicated something like a "career shopping" period in high school and early college experiences. Avoiding math and science often forced them to reject some careers and majors. There was an indication that making information readily available on communication majors and careers -- through counseling and advising, catalogs and brochures and introductory courses -- could be very effective recruiting strategies at this stage. The following comments are illustrative:

F: During like closer to graduation in high school, I decided I didn't want to do that (nursing). And I deliberated about it in my senior year when I decided to go into broadcasting. And broadcasting news is what, you know, I decided to do. About the time when I was supposed to get my AA (Associate of Arts degree), I started deliberating again, and I decided I wanted to go into optometry. ... But after going through and doing some research and seeing what I was up against -- all the classes and the chemistry and the math -- I just decided to stick with broadcasting.

F: When I first applied to this university -- when I first came here -- I thought I would like to major in computer science. I was interested in computers, but the math part of it just did not agree with me.

F: When I first applied I thought about food science because I loved biology when I was in the 10th grade, and I was crazy about it. Then I took a calculus class. So I ended up looking around at all colleges. I went to all of them.

M: I got my first inspiration from computer science in high school, but I was stuck between loose ends really between the 10th and 11th grades. My brother majored in telecommunications from here, and he came out very well. He got a job down in Miami. He suggested it to me. He sent me several pamphlets from the university here.

M: I guess I finally decided about a year or so ago. Production. For one thing it didn't require much math, much science, and I've always been interested in telecommunications, how it works, stuff like that./MOD: How did you know that it didn't require much math?/ The catalog. And I got some advising.

F: I was like undecided what I wanted to be for a major, so I talked to an adviser and he was like, why don't you take some introductory courses. Intro to PR was one that he suggested, so I took it and, you know, during the course I decided I'm going to let this be my major. (Public relations) really struck my interest and was like something I really wanted to do. So I just stayed on in it.

3. Several themes emerged from the discussion about writing. Participants typically had been reinforced for their writing ability in high school. They felt that many other black students had not been reinforced or challenged in the same way. Some typical comments:

F: Always through school I realized that I could write well and that I liked to deal with people. I didn't like math. I attribute that partially to just the way I am and partially to that I think my math instructors were just horrible. As I look back, I had very, very poor math instructors.

F: During high school you get to the point where you think, what am I going to do. I'd always liked English, and you know, I think I write well and I always had a leaning, I think, toward communications.

M: When I was in 9th grade I did pretty well in English in terms of writing and my teacher suggested I try for the high school paper.

4. One implication from the discussion is that early journalism writing courses were not positive experiences for many of these students. Those

basic skills courses may, in fact, have driven them away from considering newspaper work. A strong sense of confidence in their ability to do journalism writing came through in the discussion, but it was also clear that they perceived the style as taught in the beginning courses to be uncreative and tedious. These comments are illustrative:

F: I realized I wanted to go into journalism when I was in, oh 11th grade, and I was going to work on the newspaper staff. Up until I took the (introductory writing course). Then I started getting all nervous about having to write every day, so that's when I looked into public relations.

F: After (introductory writing course), I was like, there's gotta be a better way to live.

MOD: (The style) limited your abilities?/ F: A lot of times that's how I felt. I'd want to put some ideas down, but then the teacher would say, "This is good, but it's not what I'm looking for." And so that's why I decided, you know, maybe broadcasting would be better."

F: I came from a community college,too, and I started off in (introductory writing). But I withdrew from the class because it was a night class, this type thing. But the little time I spent in the class, I enjoyed it and I was doing well in that class. But it was nothing that ... I wouldn't want do (that kind of writing), but if I had to, I think I could ... if I just put my mind to it.

M: I took that class, (introductory writing) but I didn't take it here, I took it at the community college, and I enjoyed the course, because it gave me a chance to kind of see the different writing techniques. And I guess some of the things that we did were getting kind of difficult, and it was mostly beginning to get kind of boring, you know. ... I didn't really find it that hard once I began, you know, to think about it and everything started, you know, to roll.

M: In terms of experience (reporting) was a good class because you had to go out every week and interview people and write a story. I learned a lot from the class, but I don't really think my grade reflects that. It was a pretty good class, but if you were a person that was hesitant about going into journalism, then that class would definitely be a determining factor in whether you were staying in journalism or change your major. It's the type

of class that is just very demanding. I think it simulates what a news reporter does. ... But in terms of the style of writing you have to use and the way your stories are edited and the way you have to deal with people in terms of interviews, I think it's very realistic. Real world journalism is very demanding and if you're not the kind of person that likes to go around and interview people and make appointments and have people not show up and things like that, if you can't deal with that, then you would change your mind after taking reporting.

5. Repeatedly, participants indicated they had confidence in their ability to handle journalistic writing. They were not staying away from a lack of aptitude, but because they perceived more chances for creativity in other fields. These comments are illustrative.

F: Well, I really don't want to write. I mean I would rather be on tv or, you know, radio or videotape or news. I don't think I would like the writing aspect, though I think I could change over to that if need be.

F: When I was in high school I had worked with my yearbook staff. I had so much fun organizing the yearbook, so I said, well, I'll go into advertising and do graphics. So I decided that I wanted to do graphics and now that I'm into it, I really like doing graphics. The copy is ok, the writing is ok, but I really want to do graphics.

F: At the community college I went to, I worked at their newspaper. In their feature department. And I enjoyed it to some extent. But I don't think I'd do it because it just wasn't me./MOD: Did you have problems with your editor or other reporters?/ No, I didn't really have any problems with them. You know, they were very supportive and so forth. Actually the editor encouraged me to continue. But that's just not what I wanted. It wouldn't fulfill whatever ... I do like to be around people, I know that for sure. And I think I much prefer broadcasting. With newspapers, it tends to be you and your typewriter and whatever story.

M: The style of writing in journalism is very ... I would say it's very nit-picky as compared to broadcast. I mean in broadcast you know, you can just kind of like write, because the stories aren't that long and there's not as

many style guidelines as there are for journalism/MOD: Who has had a broadcast writing course? Do you agree with that?/ No../No./Definitely not.

M: Journalism writing seems too stiff. To me, it's not exciting ... It doesn't appeal to that part of me that wants more adventure, that wants more exposure.

6. "Visibility" was a recurring theme in the focus groups discussions. The concept seemed to have two different facets. One was a perceived lack of personal visibility in journalism. The other was a the lack of visibility for newspaper journalists in general among blacks. The following exchange is illustrative:

MOD: So now that maybe we've talked about a negative side of newspaper work, let's go to a positive side. Let's say, for instance, editors of a paper. What could they do to get more high school students interested in newspaper work?/F: Maybe the chance to see that one story you write is going to make it ... You know, you really get a lot of attention for this story./F: Or have a high school page, you know, if you work on a newspaper or staff at your high school, or even if you don't, you submit a story and have it published in the local, you know, big paper, and everybody'll see your name./F: I agree with that. I think she's making a very good point about it being visible. /F: I can think of one example. You know, in the high schools ... you've got people coming out and recruiting the engineers, recruiting the computer science major. I can't remember anyone ever coming out and saying, you know, hey, look at what a great job you could be doing in journalism. The field is not really visible, compared to some others.

F: It's just like a visibility thing, because the more the students think somebody's going to see their name or something, the more they'll want to let other people know, "Hey, I can do this. Give me a chance. I can do this."

F: You look at a lot of newspapers ... and you wonder what happened? Didn't any blacks apply? Where is everybody? If you look at most newspapers in the country, you don't see many blacks Not that many. What's going on?

F: I think that the black people who are already in the field should make themselves more visible to the students at the high school or even at the college level. You know, when I was in high school, everybody who comes and talks to you about a career is a white person. I'm not saying that that's a turn off, but ... But you never really see a black journalist or whatever, so that would be an incentive. "Well, if somebody like me's doing this, maybe I'll try this also."

7. Two suggestions seemed to dominate participants' views on ways to encourage black interest in journalism. One was for high school teachers to stress writing; the other was for people in the industry to take a personal interest in black students. Others thought the opportunity for community service would be a draw. Some illustrative comments:

M: Teachers need to find good writers and then to, you know, encourage them to get on the newspaper. Because if my teacher, if she wouldn't have said something to me, I may have never gotten on a high school newspaper staff./I think in trying to get someone involved in anything, you know, people just need a little push. People need to show them the light early enough. That's the main reason I was interested in engineering because the guy expressed a lot of interest in me. ... I wasn't interested in engineering, but I felt like, "Wow, this guy believes in me and he believes I can do something."/ You know, if maybe your guidance counselors or your teachers or maybe some guys from the newspapers, if they'd visit the campus and express an interest in the students and give them the guidance that's necessary, then perhaps you could influence them to undertake a career in journalism.

F: I think at the high school level they should stress more English. You know, strengthen that area more. Cause I mean, you know, if they don't feel they're a good writer, they're not going to want to go into that. ... They don't offer a variety of English; it's always just English, nothing different, no positive aspect to it. .. And people dread going to that.

F: Minorities (may not enter) a field where they think, "Well, I'm not going to have anybody that's like me who I can relate to." They know if they're a teacher or some other profession that they would have somebody to relate to. (Journalists) need to let them know that, hey, we are here in journalism and come join us./ MOD: We need role models?/ F: Right, role models.

F: I don't know how this would work, because English teachers, like, as (she) was saying, you know English teachers' writing is not the same as journalism writing. It's just not. And it's like when you get in (journalism) you have this culture shock. You think you're going into an English class and it's totally different, but, you know, maybe, if the English teachers would have assignments and encourage their students to read the newspaper, maybe get them interested in, you know, what the newspaper's all about, something like that.

F: (responding to a question on recruiting strategy) Maybe encouragement. I'd comment on the things that you have done, everybody likes a pat on the back. So I'd really make a big fuss about what you're doing now, maybe that would encourage you and you'd get better and better. So I'd use encouragement.

F: I guess you could try to make the job as attractive as possible. It's probably a good way to meet people or to get involved in your community. If you pick up that the person's very community oriented, I'd stress that you get in and make some kind of contribution to whatever area of the community you are in as a journalist.

8. Several deterrents to entering journalism came out of the discussions. The perception of journalistic writing as tedious and uncreative has already been mentioned. Some of the excitement of journalism is apparently not being communicated to the students. Another deterrent is the perception that journalism is a lot of effort for little financial reward, although "salary" generally did not generate much discussion beyond mention of low pay. Some illustrative comments along these lines:

F: To me, you could compare (journalism) to teaching, to me. It's like a lot of work for a little bit of money. They ask a whole lot of you, but they aren't willing to pay for it.

F: I think it's something you have to have kind of inside yourself, because I look at some of the instructors sometimes, like my lecturer for reporting, and I think he gets excited about going out and getting a story. And I don't know if you can attribute that to how long they've been in the field. I mean they're educators now, but you know, I just never had this like drive and this excitement to go out and get a story and some people just have that./I think most journalists are like, they say, you know, so dedicated they want to get the full story across. Just like she said about her instructor. With my instructor, I had the same experience. It was like, you know, what are you seeing that I'm not seeing.

F: I don't see the potential for advancement (in newspaper work). It's like you get in there and there's not that much job security. You can just get wiped out in a heartbeat.

MOD: Do you all have any suggestions about how editors or educators might get people like you more interested in newspaper work?/ F: More money. Offer more money.

M: (The job possibilities) seem to be higher in public relations. I haven't read anything that ... documenting that there's not a lot of job opportunities in journalism, in newspapers, but you know just from looking at it you have people on staff at a newspaper, and unless they go to a better newspaper, there's not a big job rotation involved on a newspaper. Just from what I've seen about it.

MOD What about the money?/M: What they've been telliing me, you know, since I've been in this college, is that in the beginning you make like minimum wage. Then you can move up quickly into a major market, then the money looks a little better./MOD: Where would you think you'll make the most money?/ I'd say television/ I'd say PR/ The potential to make a lot of money is there in tv, but the opportunity isn't there./ ... MOD: For all of you, how much does a money figure -- salary -- figure into your decision?/ M: It's a slight deterrent. Of course, I would like to make money./MOD: Was it a major factor in deciding what you wanted to do? M: Not really. It's a plus, I think, but not the major.

CONCLUSIONS

While the journalism profession can be justifiably proud of its commitment to black parity in hiring, warning signals abound that continued progress toward that goal is not going to be easy. College budget constraints are already taking their toll on minority enrollments. The journalism administrators and focus group participants indicate that there is a definite trend away from black interest in newsroom careers.

This project looked specifically for evidence about several factors that seem to have wide acceptance as reasons for low black interest. These factors include a belief that newspaper work has little credibility or trust among blacks, that low pay is a deterrent, and that writing difficulties keep young blacks from considering careers in journalism. While there is some evidence for the validity of each of those beliefs, our conclusion is that their importance in deterring interest in newsroom careers is over-estimated.

The idea of a general black distrust of newspapers was a part of the Kerner Commission report, which may help account for its wide acceptance. As noted, there is little empirical evidence to support that notion, nor did it surface in either the answers of the journalism educators or the focus group discussions. Journalism recruiters should be cautious about approaching interview situations with the expectation that blacks are hostile toward newspapers in general. Our advice is that recruiters be positive rather than defensive about their profession's interest in minorities.

As to pay, we are not suggesting that journalism pays extravagant salaries, but we do conclude that salary is not an overriding consideration in career choices being made by young blacks. Obviously, higher entry level salaries will put newspapers in a more competitive position to attract

talented blacks. But the focus group discussions suggest that young blacks may not clearly see the opportunities for advancement or the mid-career salaries available in newspaper work.

The importance of an aptitude for writing is a complex one. Our evidence suggests that young blacks interested in communication careers are rather proud of their writing ability and that they see introductory journalistic writing as stifling that ability rather than fostering it. The "weed-out" approach in introductory journalism courses may be dysfunctional in the case of young blacks whose commitment to a newspaper career may not be all that strong in the first place. This area is probably one more relevant for journalism educators than for newspaper recruiters. Both educators and recruiters need to take opportunities to stress the creative side of newspaper work.

On a more positive side, this project identifies three factors that we feel have not been emphasized enough in minority recruitment. These include the visibility of black journalists, the importance of early positive experience, and the need to capitalize on the prestige of respected journalism education programs.

We conclude that the profession's successes in black recruitment is a story not well-told. A part of the problem may rest in the nature of the medium -- that it is more difficult for newspapers than for television to show their black staff members. Whatever the case, minority recruitment must utilize black journalists as role models. When universities recruit in high schools, they should attempt to get a local black reporter to accompany them.

This project underscores the importance of recruiting students at the high school level, and perhaps even earlier. The profession should not

depend upon high school publications as the sole resource for identifying young black talent. English teachers may play a more critical role in fostering interest in journalistic writing. More importantly, the profession needs to make information available about the various opportunities in the newspaper business, not just the writing aspect alone.

Perhaps our most controversial recommendation will be this one: that resources and priorities in minority recruitment should go to established and respected schools of journalism. We found repeated indications that the prestige of the campus department is an important first step in fostering interest in a subsequent newspaper career.

To summarize these points:

1. Black students do not have a level of distrust for newspapers that would deter them from seeking a career in that field.

2. Entry-level salary is not an overriding consideration in career choice by young blacks. However, black students are generally unaware of mid-career opportunities in the newspaper field.

3. Black students interested in journalism have confidence in their writing ability, but find basic news writing uncreative and unchallenging.

4. The prestige and reputation of the journalism school is an important draw in fostering an interest in a newspaper career.

5. Newspapers must make better use of black journalists as role models for students deciding upon a career path.

6. Newspapers and journalism schools should encourage positive experiences in journalism at the high school level, perhaps through things like awards programs.

Like many preliminary studies, this one concludes with a call for further research. Particularly important at this point seems to be additional information on sex differences in career aspiration among young blacks, and further studies on problems involving retention and placement.

Finally, we suggest that leadership in the area of minority recruitment is coming primarily from the industry, rather than from journalism education, and that educators must become more aggressive and committed to goals of black parity. An important first step is for journalism schools to lay out specific goals and programs and to place somebody in charge of implementation. Those schools doing the best job in minority affairs seem to be those that in some sense have institutionalized the process.

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